

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2197

S E C R E T JIDDA 5835

NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM THE CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SA, US

SUBJECT: MESSAGE FOR KING KHALID

REF: STATE 197113

SUMMARY: CHARGE DELIVERED SECRETARY'S LETTER TO MINSTATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS PRINCE SA'UD AUGUST 20. SA'UD HAD ALREADY SEEN KRAFT ARTICLE. CHARGE TOLD HIM SECRETARY'S LETTER MADE DISTINCTION BETWEEN SOME OF KRAFT'S INFO--WHICH MAY IN PART HAVE BEEN CORRECT--AND THE INTERPRETATIONS KRAFT WAS PUTTING ON THAT INFO. SA'UD SAID KRAFT'S SOURCES WERE NEVERTHELESS VERY GOOD, AND THAT U.S. WAS HANDLING DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION WITH AN OLD FRIEND IN AN UNCONVENTIONAL WAY. CTMMNT: WE CANNOT KEEP SAG FROM SPECULATING, BUT PROBABLY THE LESS WE SAY HENCE-FORTH THE BETTER. SAG WILL BE WATCHING FOR STRAWS IN THE WIND, AND SOME GOOD NEWS ON MILITARY SUPPLY WOULD BE REASSURING--ESPECIALLY TO FAHD. DURING SECRETARY'S VISIT TO TAIF HE MIGHT WISH TO GET NEW NOMINEE OFF TO A GOOD START BY PERSONALLY RECOMMENDING HIM AND ASKING FOR SAG'S AGREEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. I SAW MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS PRINCE SAUD AT 1900 LOCAL AUGUST 20. I TOLD HIM JOSEPH KRAFT HAD THE DAY BEFORE PUBLISHED A COLUMN DISCUSSING THE SIGNIFICANCE

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OF VARIOUS AMBASSADORIAL SHIFTS WHICH HE SAID WERE PLANNED. I HAD A LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY TO HIS MAJESTY ON THIS SUBJECT. PRINCE SA'US REPLIED HE HAD READ THE KRAFT ARTICLE

THAT MORNING.

2. AFTER READING THE LETTER HE SAID "IT LOOKS AS IF KRAFT WAS RIGHT." I ANSWERED THAT THE ESSENTIAL POINT OF YOUR LETTER HAD BEEN TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN KRAFT'S INFORMATION ON AMBASSADORIAL CHANGES--SOME OF WHICH WAS CORRECT--AND THE SIGNIFICANCE HE ATTRIBUTED TO THEM. KRAFT WAS AN ABLE, IMAGINATIVE REPORTER AND THE CONCLUSIONS HE DREW ABOUT A SHIFT IN THE U.S. DISPOSITION TOWARD SAUDI ARABIA WERE HIS OWN AND NOT THOSE OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. SA'UD SAID HE HOPED SO. HE REMEMBERED, HOWEVER, THAT SOME VERY SENSITIVE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN KING FEISAL AND AMBASSADOR AKINS HAD BEEN ACCURATELY REPORTED IN ONE OF KRAFT'S COLUMNS AND THAT HIS SOURCES SEEMED VERY AUTHORITATIVE.

3. SA'UD ASKED IF IT WAS TRUE THAT AMBASSADOR WILLIAM PORTER WOULD BE COMING TO SAUDI ARABIA. I SAID I DIDN'T KNOW AND COULD NOT COMMENT. SA'UD SAID HE'D WAIT AND SEE BUT THAT IT SEEMED TO HIM THE USG WAS HANDLING RELATIONS WITH ONE OF ITS OLDEST AND CLOSEST FRIENDS IN THE AREA IN AN UNUSUAL WAY.

4. COMMENT: (A) THERE'S PROBABLY NOTHING WE CAN SAY THAT WILL KEEP THE SAUDIS FROM SPECULATING THAT AMBASSADOR AKINS' DEPARTURE PORTENDS A COLD SPELL IN U.S.-SAUD RELATIONS. THEY WILL BE DISCOMPOSED--ESPECIALLY PRINCE FAHD. (B) IT WILL BE EASY FOR US TO PROTEST TOO MUCH, AND I THINK HENCEFORTH, THE LESS SAID ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SHIFT, THE BETTER. U.S. OFFICIAL PEOPLE IN SAUDI ARABIA ARE MAKING NO COMMENT WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE KRAFT REPORT. (C) WHEN YOU COME TO TAIF YOU MIGHT BRIEFLY REPEAT THE ASSURANCES IN YOUR LETTER AND EXPRESS REGRET OVER THE LEAK. YOU MIGHT ALSO TELL THE SAUDIS THE NAME OF THE NEW AMBASSADOR. TO KEEP IT IN PETTO WOULD BE TO TANTALIZE THEM. IF YOU YOURSELF ASKED FOR THE AGREEMENT THE NOMINATION WOULD BE OFF TO A GOOD START. (D) THE SAG WILL BE WATCHING OUR ACTIONS

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CLOSELY FOR SIGNALS. IF WE WANT TO REASSURE THEM THAT WE REALLY MEAN WHAT WE SAY IT WOULD BE GOOD IF AMBASSADOR AKINS COULD SOON GIVE THEM SOME AGREEABLE NEWS--PERHAPS ABOUT DELIVERY OF MILITARY ITEMS. (E) FINALLY, WE REALLY OUGHT TO IMPROVE PERSONNEL HANDLING OF AMBASSADORS. THE LAST ONE I WORKED WITH FIRST LEARNED OF HIS TRANSFER WHEN HE RECEIVED A MESSAGE REQUESTING AGREEMENT FOR HIS SUCCESSOR. WHEN THE LIGATURES

BETWEEN AMBASSADORSHIPS ARE RAGGED, OUR FRIENDS GET APPREHENSIVE. THEY WONDER IF THEIR GREAT ALLY IS

AS STABLE, NERVELESS AND SYSTEMATIC AS THEY COUNT ON
HIM TO BE.
HORAN

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